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NEWS RELEASE

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STATE FIRE MARSHAL REMINDS IDAHOANS OF HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

BOISE ID (December 3, 2010) – As the holiday season approaches and excitement increases to decorate homes with Christmas trees, ornaments and garlands, the Idaho State Fire Marshal warns Idahoans of the added fire hazards of these decorations.

National Fire Protection Association statistics reveal that a candle fire in the home is reported to a fire department every 30 minutes, and each year fire departments across the country respond to approximately 260 structure fires caused by Christmas trees.

"As of November 30, 2010, 13 people have died in fires in Idaho," says State Fire Marshal Mark Larson. "Don't let a tragic home fire mar your spirits, or even worse, take a life this holiday season." Larson urges families to remember the following fire safety tips.

Fresh cut Christmas trees should have green needles that are hard to pull back from the branches. Keep trees at least three feet away from heat sources, including fireplaces and heating vents. Keep trees in water for their recommended two-week life.

Inspect holiday lights for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets. Only use lights that have been tested and labeled by a recognized testing laboratory, do not link more than three light strands unless the directions indicate it is safe, and remember that some lights are intended for only indoor use and should not be used outdoors.

Lit candles should be in stable holders where they cannot be easily knocked down and should never be left unattended. Lit candles should not be placed on or near Christmas trees or anything that can burn. Young children are fascinated with a burning flame, be sure candles are not in reach of curious hands.

Now is a great time to make sure smoke alarms are in working order and to review home escape plans so that in the event of a fire everyone in the household knows how to get out quickly and safely.

The Idaho State Fire Marshal's office is a division of the Idaho Department of Insurance.

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